

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9532
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL QUEBEC CITY

UNCLAS MONTREAL 1678

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: ELAB, SOPN, CA
SUBJECT: THREE FRENCH DAILIES STRIKEBOUND

1. EDITORIAL EMPLOYEES OF LARGEST CIRCULATION FRENCH DAILY PAPER IN QUEBEC, LA PRESSE, WALKED OFF THE JOB OCT. 6 IN WHAT WAS TO BE A TOKEN 48-HOUR PROTEST OVER APPOINTMENT OF A SPORTS EDITOR WITHOUT THE SPORTS STAFF'S APPROVAL. BY OCT. 12 IT WAS APPARENT THE EMPLOYEES ACTION COULD HAVE MORE SERIOUS RAMIFICATIONS.

2. NOT ONLY DID REPORTERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS AND SOME EDITORS VOTE TO STAY OFF THE JOB UNTIL MANAGEMENT AGREES TO DEMANDS THAT EMPLOYEES HAVE MORE SAY IN MANAGEMENT EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS, THEY WERE JOINED BY SYMPATHETIC WORKERS AT MONTREAL-MATIN WHICH USES SAME PRESS AND IS OWNED BY SAME COMPANY. BETWEEN THE TWO, DISCONTINUED CIRCULATION APPROXIMATES 340,000.

3. THE STRIKING STAFFS OF THE TWO MONTREAL DAILIES JOIN THAT OF LE SOLEIL IN QUEBEC CITY WHICH HAS BEEN CLOSED SINCE AUG. 30 AS MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES OF THAT 150,000 CIRCULATION DAILY WAIT EACH OTHER OUT OVER ISSUES OF EDITORIAL CONTROL AND PAY INCREASES. (QUEBEC 0328)

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4. LA PRESSE WORKERS HAVE BEEN WITHOUT A CONTRACT SINCE LAST DECEMBER AND WILL BE IN LEGAL POSITION TO STRIKE NOVEMBER 29. THEY ARE EXPECTED TO ASK FOR POWER TO VETO ANY MANAGEMENT DECISION, HAVING PREVIOUSLY WON THE RIGHT TO CONSULTATION ON THE NEWS DECISION PROCESS. THE LA PRESSE DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL HAS BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING, "IF THE UNIONS AT LA PRESSE AND MONTREAL-MATIN TRY TO OBTAIN GREATER MANAGEMENT JURISDICTION, THEN I THINK

IT WILL SPELL THE END OF LA PRESSE AND MONTREAL-MATIN."

5. CLOSING OF THE THREE PAPERS COULD PROMPT A MASSIVE CIRCULATION JUMP FOR THE REMAINING MAJOR FRENCH DAILY, LE DEVOIR, HAD IT THE PRESS CAPABILITY TO MEET DEMAND. ITS PUBLISHER, CLAUDE RYAN, ESCHEWED SUCH AVARICE EDITORIALY OCT. 12, CALLING ON BOTH SIDES TO REACH QUICKLY A "REASONABLE SETTLEMENT." RYAN, MAY HAVE IN MIND THAT THE THREE CLOSED PAPERS, LIKE LE DEVOIR, SUPPORT THE CONCEPT OF A UNIFIED CANADA, AND THIS IS NO TIME TO THIN THE FEDERALIST RANKS.
HARPER

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